

MINNEAPOLIS (Minn.)
Approved For Release 2000/04/13 : CIA-RDP70-00058R000200150122-8

STAR

Circ.: e. 287/425

Front Edit Other
Page Page Page

Date: MAR 18 1961

KENNEDY'S GI TEAM

Allen Dulles' Gamble Reaped Nazi Secrets

By FLETCHER KNEBEL

Minneapolis Star Staff Correspondent

Top men of the Kennedy administration represent the full political flowering of the World War II veteran's generation. But one man, America's top intelligent agent, serves President Kennedy after missions for seven other presidents. He is an older man, yet he played a vivid role in World War II.

ALLEN W. DULLES, Director Central Intelligence Agency.

A few minutes before midnight Aug. 23, 1945, Allen Dulles climbed the steps to the apartment of a bachelor friend and colleague, Gerald M. Mayer, in Bern, Switzerland.

Dulles, then 50, a tall man with somewhat stooped shoulders, who wore spectacles and usually a heavy pipe, was a familiar figure to Swiss police, for he was head of the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Bern and thus the top Yankee spy in this city of war-time spies.

Spies of both the Axis and the western democracies were tolerated in neutral Switzerland, but this night Dulles took special precautions to make sure he would not be tailed. A few hours before he had been electrified by an unexpected offer of secret documents from a stranger. It could be a trap or it could be the greatest intelligence treasure of the war.

On the face of it, the proposition had been incredible, even for a man accustomed to dealing in the bizarre and the shadowy.

The United States, in brief, had been offered condensations, and in some cases exact texts, of top-secret dispatches flowing in code between the German foreign ministry in Berlin and some 50 Nazi embassies and legations scattered over the world. There were also promises that the transfer of these documents could continue indefinitely, opening up the thrilling possibility that the Allies could know every major Axis move before it was made.



Friend Offered Secrets

The circumstances were almost too simple to be credited. That morning a tall, dignified Prussian, who said he had fled the Nazi regime and was now a citizen of a Latin American country, had walked into the office of Mayer, who was head of the United States office of war information in Bern.

The stranger said a friend of his had access in Berlin to almost all foreign ministry dispatches and wished to make them available to the Allies because he hated Adolf Hitler and the other Nazi masters of Germany.

Mayer, all skeptic, nevertheless called Dulles. When the OSS agent arrived, the two Americans quizzed the stranger at length. The former German drew from his pocket an envelope and took out three dispatches in German. They purported to be messages from Nazi ambassadors in France, Turkey and Czechoslovakia to German Foreign Minister Joachim Von Ribbentrop.

Dulles told the stranger candidly that he suspected he was an agent provocateur who would either (1) let the Americans have the papers and then denounce them to the Allies as spies or (2) let them radio the content of the papers to Washington and then monitor the broadcast as a method of breaking the United States code.

The stranger admitted the justice of the accusation but invited the two men to meet again that night with his friend, the man from Berlin who got the documents.

The clandestine appointment was kept that midnight in Mayer's apartment. When Dulles walked in, he found Mayer, the tall refugee from Germany and a short, stocky man who wore a black leather jacket and was nervous and jittery.

Mayer passed around highballs, but though all drank, the atmosphere was heavy with suspicion. After preliminary chit-chat, the short, stocky German beckoned Dulles and Mayer to a table. He broke a red swastika seal on a large brown envelope and poured out the contents.

There were no fewer than 186 documents, some mere notes but others verbatim texts of foreign office dispatches. Dulles, who spoke and read German with ease, riffled through the papers, reading a paragraph here and another there.

British Suspected Hoax

Had anyone been approached before Mayer he asked. The two strangers smiled.

"Oh, yes," said the tall one, "I went to the British intelligence office here. They asked me what I wanted for them and when I said 'nothing,' they said it was a hoax and they would have nothing more to do with me."

The four men talked until almost dawn of Aug. 24. What Dulles wanted particularly were references outside Germany, and the little man from Berlin supplied them in abundance. He gave the name of his son and his second wife, both living in South Africa. He gave names of people in America and England who knew him.

He also went over his own life in detail. He said he was an assistant to Dr. Karl Ritter, the German army's liaison chief in the foreign office. Over Ritter's desk passed a duplicate, not of every embassy dispatch, but of every one which concerned the army—in wartime a high per-

He said that for almost two years he had tried to get to Switzerland to make contact with the Allies, but his every effort was thwarted. Finally a courier took sick and he was permitted to carry the diplomatic pouch to Bern as replacement courier.

How could he take the papers without being apprehended? It was his job, he said, to brief the dispatches for Ritter since they were too voluminous for the head man to study in detail. Ritter's aid said he had his own office, could both make notes and copy important messages in full.

The little man's explanation for offering to spy for the Allies had the ring of sincerity. He said he did not consider treason against Germany, that Hitler was the traitor while he was the patriot, desiring to see his homeland returned to peace and sanity.

Dulles and the two Germans left the apartment separately after hours of talk. The courier from Berlin returned to his hotel, and not until months later did Dulles learn that the German was quizzed by Gestapo agents in Berlin, demanding to know why he had been absent from his Bern hotel all night.

'Date' Was His Excuse

The little man pleaded a date with a Swiss lady of the night and convincingly showed a Bern doctor's signed bill for administering a medicine to the courier the morning of Aug. 24.

Dulles did two things at once. He radioed Washington from the secret OSS radio transmitter in Bern for an extensive check of every name, place and relative supplied by the courier. He then spent hours and hours over the documents.

Many of them were weeks old and, to his amazement, they chronicled exactly many major moves the Germans had made since.

Due time, back came the OSS report from Washington. Every fact checked. Only then did Dulles place the dispatches themselves on the air to Washington in code. He was convinced now this was no code-breaking trap.

For the next 20 months, until the Third Reich crumbled in flames, Dulles received a steady flow of documents from Berlin. The little Allied benefactor now had his own code name, "George Wood," and Dulles gave code names to each batch of new messages as they came.

The first was called "alpha," the second "beta" and so on up the Greek alphabet. OSS officers later referred to the whole intelligence source as the "kappa papers."

Shipments came to Dulles regularly every month. Usually he got them from a Swiss mail drop. The Berlin agent became friendly with the regular Berlin-Bern diplomatic courier, told him he had a girl friend in Switzerland and asked him to mail her letters upon arrival in Switzerland.

The "girl friend" was Dulles, and the most highly secret German foreign dispatches came to him through the ordinary mails. Miraculously, the courier never suspected.

Once, about a year later, "George Wood" came to Switzerland himself, bringing papers stored in a false bottom of the diplomatic dispatch case. Some of the information was slipped out via Sweden, where an OSS agent in Stockholm alerted by Dulles, transmitted the papers to Washington.

Biggest Secrets Learned

Some of the biggest German "secrets" of 1943-44-45 were known to the Allies within days, thanks to the "Kappa papers."

For instance "George Wood" once sent the complete Japanese fleet order of battle. This became a vital clue to United States navy intelligence officers in confirming that they had broken a key Japanese code in the Pacific.

The Wood dispatches revealed that Franco was secretly shipping munitions to Germany, told which German cities were being paralyzed by bombing and, most important of all, gave Gen. Eisenhower's officers an accurate breakdown of the German forces which would be in Normandy after the D-day landings.

Within the small command circle in Washington privy to the espionage coup, the "Kappa papers" were a tremendous hit. Col. William J. (Wild Bill) Donovan, head of OSS, believed the German foreign office documents worth the entire expense of the costly OSS organization.

President Roosevelt, elated and intrigued by the secret treasure, was briefed on each new batch and often read them himself. Many of the papers enabled him to keep a few steps ahead of his war ally, Sir Winston Churchill, who was fed by the veteran and brilliant British intelligence service.

After the war, Dulles was decorated twice, for secret negotiations leading to the German surrender in Italy in late April and for helping pinpoint the German buzz bomb launching sites on the German coast.

Because of postwar intelligence ramifications, the secret of the "Kappa papers" was kept within a small group. Not until 1950 was anything written about it and then, since Dulles declined to confirm the story, few believed the yarn.

The entire file of papers, still in United States government hands, covers thousands of German foreign dispatches. As an intelligence scoop, it puts to shame the much-publicized operations of "Cicero," the agent who microfilmed secret papers in the British embassy in Turkey and turned them over to the Germans for a fat fee. "Cicero," however, was discovered after a few months. "George Wood" operated for almost two years.

Agent Was Never Paid

Aside from a little expense money, Dulles and his men never paid "George Wood" a cent for his efforts, although he was feted when he slipped over the border into Switzerland with a final packet of documents just before the Nazi collapse.

"George Wood" still lives in Germany under his real name. Dulles has seen him many times since the war. Some day, if the two men could collaborate and join memories of the operation, it would make one of the most fascinating and factual accounts in the whole history of international espionage. Mayer also is still alive, a businessman who lives in Paris, Bern and Geneva.

(After the war Dulles returned to law practice in New York. President Truman appointed him deputy director of the central intelligence agency (CIA) in 1951 and two years later President Eisenhower made him the CIA director as Dulles' brother, the late John Foster, was made secretary of state.

(President Kennedy a few days after his election on Nov. 8, 1960, asked Dulles to remain as intelligence chief. He is still on the job.)

NEXT: Pierre Salinger, White House Press Secretary.